

Secondary Regulations - 2011



FAQs – Information for Rhode Island Educators and Administrators

Secondary Regulations Revisions 2011

The Rhode Island Board of Regents adopted new secondary regulations in March 2011 that include changes in the requirements for earning a high school diploma that start with the class of 2014. This FAQ document is intended to answer the most common questions about requirements for earning a high school diploma for students in current and future classes. This information is for your information and will help you answer questions that you may get from parents and other community members. RIDE is developing a parent/student FAQ document and will distribute as soon as available.

All students must complete the following, at a minimum, to earn high school diploma:

- 20 courses
 - 4 English Language Arts, 4 math, 3 science, 3 social studies, and PE/Health and other locally required or elective courses
- 2 diploma assessments (exhibition, portfolio and/or comprehensive course assessment)
- State assessment – get a score of 2 (partially proficient) in both reading and mathematics
- Meet additional requirements of districts and the local schools

All students must meet the high school requirements listed above. Beginning with class of 2014, there are changes that will be noted in this document.

To see the full set of the 2011 regulations go to www.ride.ri.gov.

1. What happens if current juniors or seniors (classes of 2012 and 2013) do not meet the required achievement level (score of 2) on the reading and mathematics state assessments?

Details of how students show that they meet the required level of achievement measured by the test are determined by each district or school and must be made available by each district or school. Details should be included in the student handbook. It is the responsibility of the district or school to ensure that students demonstrate proficiency in those areas not met on the state assessment through other measures.

2. What is the achievement level on the state assessment for the classes of 2014 and beyond?

Students in the classes of 2014 and beyond are required to reach a minimum score of partially proficient (or 2) on the state reading and mathematics assessments in order to earn a high school diploma.

3. What if a student in the class of 2014 and beyond does not pass the state assessment in their junior year?

If a student does not earn a score of 2 (partially proficient) on the NECAP reading or mathematics tests, the district is responsible for ensuring that the procedure listed below is followed:

- **Progress plan:** The school will develop a plan and a schedule for each student that will detail additional instructional or learning opportunities to be provided in the areas in which a student did not score a 2. Students

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will also be told exactly what score (amount of progress they must demonstrate on the NECAP to meet the state requirement) they need to get on the NECAP test(s) they take in the fall of their senior year.

- **Communication:** *Students and families must be informed of the progress plan and regularly updated about student progress.*
 - **Retake NECAP test(s):** *Students will retake the NECAP test in those areas, on which they did not minimally score a 2 (partially proficient), in the fall of his/her senior year.*
- 4. Who determines the amount of improvement that a student must make in order to show sufficient progress on the NECAP tests?**

RIDE determined a reasonable amount of progress for each range of scores that must be made by students on the NECAP tests. RIDE published the “progress toward proficiency” scores for the NECAP tests in the initial Secondary Regulations Guidance document released in May 2011 (www.ride.ri.gov). Students, schools, and families must be notified of the amount of growth that students must make on NECAP tests at the time of development of the progress plan.

- 5. What happens if a student in the class of 2014 and beyond does not earn the minimum score that demonstrates progress toward proficiency they were supposed to make when he or she retakes the NECAP?**

If a student has received additional instruction, followed his/her growth plan, and/or still does not show sufficient progress on the NECAP, they may take a different test to show they are at the required level of proficiency to earn a diploma.

- 6. What are the other tests that students in the classes of 2014 and beyond can take if they do not meet the required progress or score on the NECAP or other state tests?**

RIDE will identify a list of acceptable alternate tests that may include: SAT tests, AP tests, Accuplacer test, and others. RIDE will provide the list of tests and the acceptable scores that students must achieve on those tests. If the student takes an alternative test and achieves the minimum score published by RIDE, he or she will have met the minimum requirement for the state assessment requirement.

- 7. Will students with disabilities be able to earn a diploma?**

ALL *students who successfully complete the coursework, diploma assessments, and NECAP assessment are eligible for a diploma. It is the responsibility of each district and school to ensure that students with disabilities have appropriate supports and ample opportunities to learn and meet the requirements to earn a diploma. Some students may require additional time or opportunities to continue working toward earning a diploma. Students with disabilities must receive appropriate accommodations identified through the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process for participation in the state assessment. Students with disabilities who have not earned a diploma in four years of schooling remain eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) until they achieve the diploma or turn age 21.*

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8. Will English-language learners (ELLs) be able to earn a diploma?

ALL students who successfully complete the coursework, diploma assessments, and NECAP assessment are eligible for a diploma. It is the responsibility of each district and school to ensure that ELLs have appropriate supports and ample opportunities to learn and meet the requirements to earn a diploma. Some students may require additional time or opportunities to continue working toward earning a diploma. Districts are responsible for using student data and for providing supports as long as the student is enrolled in school (minimum age of 18 or has transition plans to enroll in another program). In addition to the supports described above, English language learners that:

- *have low levels of English proficiency,*
- *have been served by Rhode Island public schools for less than four years, and*
- *have had **uninterrupted** formal schooling prior to entering Rhode Island public schools*

will be eligible to take an alternative assessment or set of assessments that are appropriate to determine their academic proficiency. RIDE will provide the list of tests and the acceptable scores that students must achieve on those tests.

9. What happens if a student still doesn't meet the graduation requirements?

Students must meet all of the state and local graduation requirements in order to be eligible to earn a high school diploma. Students who cannot do so after four years of high school, or until they reach the age of 18, (or longer if entitled) will be provided additional opportunities and time to demonstrate their readiness for graduation. As students continue to work toward a diploma, students are entitled to full academic support from their school.

10. Will students participating in the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment (RIAA) get a diploma?

*Students with significant cognitive disabilities who meet the participation criteria for the RI Alternate Assessment are not assessed on standards that meet the minimum academic achievement level established by the Board of Regents and will **not** be eligible to earn a diploma. All students who participate in the RIAA are eligible to remain in school until they reach the age of 21.*

11. If a student assessed in the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment (RIAA) will not get a diploma, what is the point of participating in the assessment?

State law requires all children attending public schools to participate in the state uniform testing program (RIGL 16-22-9). No Child Left Behind, the federal law, requires states to include all students in the state assessments system to ensure that each student is instructed toward achievement on grade level expectations; this includes students assessed in the RI Alternate Assessment. The state assessment system is an important accountability system for ensuring that students receive the education they are entitled to and schools are held accountable for student growth.

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12. Can a student who has taken the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment (RIAA) one year switch to the regular state assessment in a subsequent year?

Yes, the determination of participation in the RI Alternate Assessment is made annually as part of the Individual Education Program (IEP) team meeting process. However, because this assessment is for students with significant cognitive disabilities, it is unlikely that a student will meet the criteria in one year and not the next. The IEP team (including the child's parent) participates in a discussion and determines if the student meets the criteria for the RI Alternate Assessment and documents it on the Participation Criteria for the Rhode Island Alternate Assessment form to ensure that each child recommended for the RI Alternate Assessment is carefully considered.

13. If a student is part of the graduating class of 2012 or 2013 but remains in school for a fifth year or beyond to complete diploma requirements and/or vocational or transition services, should they be held to the 2014 requirements.

No, if a student remains in school beyond their anticipated graduation year to meet requirements or receive entitlements for transition services or vocational training, the district must honor the requirements that were in place when he or she entered high school.

14. Can a district hold students to higher expectations than set by the state?

Yes. RI Secondary Regulations set the minimum graduation requirements including the minimum number of courses; the minimum level students must show on NECAP; and the two diploma assessments. Districts and schools may have their own set of diploma requirements that may include additional coursework, community service, and higher levels of achievement on the state test (NECAP). It is up to the district to communicate such additional requirements to students and their families prior to students entering the ninth grade.

Districts must post graduation requirements and be sure that they are listed in student handbooks and communicated in a variety of ways that include languages that make the communications accessible by families in your district.

15. The new Secondary Regulations for the class of 2014 and beyond have a section on certificates. What is a certificate and who is eligible for certificates?

Certificates are documents awarded to students that recognize that a student has attained specific and recognized skills needed for the workplace, postsecondary education or other credentialed areas. Any student can earn certificates while enrolled in high school. Examples of certificates are general work readiness certificates or career specific certificates or credentials earned as a result of successful completion of a career and technical program of study.

16. Is a certificate just another form of a diploma?

*A certificate is **NOT** a high school diploma and is not intended to be a substitute for a diploma. All students in the classes of 2014 and beyond can earn certificates whether or not they receive a diploma. No student will be awarded a certificate in lieu of a high school diploma.*

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17. The new Secondary Regulations for the class of 2014 and beyond have a section on Regents Commendation. How does a student earn a commendation?

Commendations are given to students who exceed the minimum requirement on the state assessment and who have met all of the state and local diploma requirements. All students are eligible for a Regents Commendation and if they earn a commendation, they will have a seal affixed to their diploma.

18. The new regulations require all secondary schools to utilize the state developed Early Warning System (EWS) for data that can be used as part of a dropout prevention strategy. How does this help districts support students?

Beginning at the middle school level, many students show signs of being at risk for dropping out of school. The EWS will provide all administrators and teachers in middle level and high school information alerting them when any child begins to show signs of dropping out or getting off track for earning a high school diploma. As a result, schools will be able to provide students and families with dropout prevention interventions and provide supports that are specific and appropriate.

19. What are the required supports that are part of the Secondary Regulations that need to be available for students to achieve proficiency?

There are several support requirements in all middle level and high schools that include the Personal Literacy Plan (PLP), Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and Response to Intervention (RTI).

- **Personal Literacy Plan (PLP)** – The PLP provides focused literacy support for students who are one more years below grade level.
- **Individual Learning Plan (ILP)** – The ILP is a process available for every student that specifically identifies the goals, opportunities, and progress of each student grades 6 - 12. It incorporates goal setting, student decision-making and monitors student academic progress. The ILP process should be used to inform decision-making about course scheduling, extra supports available for academic work, choices of college and career pathways that help students reach their goals, and should allow students to have a voice in their education. Parent engagement is required.
- **Response to Intervention (RTI)** - RTI is a data supported process for making decisions relating to student achievement and engagement. Middle level and high schools are all required to examine student achievement data to support a variety of instructional methods for meeting the needs of different learners.

20. What are some of the additional learning opportunities that are available for students?

The learning opportunities available for students in secondary schools depend on their goals and their needs. Districts are required to provide students with expanded learning opportunities that help students meet their academic and career goals and successfully meet the requirements to earn a high school diploma. For example, students may take college courses while still in high school (early college access) and some students may participate in virtual learning environments. Students seeking to graduate with a strong foundation in a career of their choosing or to learn more about their career options can enroll in career and technical programs. There are also many opportunities for extra academic support for students who may need more than their scheduled classes to learn and achieve.

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21. How will these different learning opportunities support students in graduating and getting their high school diploma?

Districts and schools must recognize student participation in a variety of expanded learning opportunities as meeting some of the requirements for earning a high school diploma. In addition to those opportunities described in #21, student participation in internship work through community-based organizations can be recognized for course credit and demonstration of proficiency.

22. What are Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study?

CTE programs of study are programs that provide a series of rigorous courses and career and work related experiences in major career areas. Students who enroll in CTE programs meet all of the high school graduation requirements while in their CTE program and gain valuable academic and technical skills that allows them to earn industry recognized certificates along with their diploma and can earn them advanced standing in college or technical schools after they graduate.

23. How will districts be held accountable for providing the best system for all students?

Districts will be monitored through the Commissioner's Review process to ensure that they are fulfilling their responsibilities to support students appropriately and that they maintain regular communications with families and students.